

On the Antiquity and Traditions of Shāhzādpūr.—By MAULAVI ABDUL
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Among the various methods, which the Society has adopted, for the study of the land and people of Asia, the decipherment and reading of ancient inscriptions, on old temples, tombs and other monuments, is one. Unfortunately, when some of these inscriptions are not accompanied by oral traditions or elucidatory notes, they give very little useful information. In the same way, mere traditions, unaccompanied by written inscriptions, are full of inaccurate hypotheses. In my opinion, tradition always has a substratum of facts which antiquarians can seldom disregard, and anthropologists never. It is to be regretted that since the death of the late Prof. Blochmann, our Society has not had the advantage of such an indefatigable researcher regarding Muhammadan Bengal. Thanks to the labours of a few workers, our knowledge of the early annals of the Europeans in Bengal is far more accurate now than it was before.

The traditions of Shāhzādpūr—which I have collected—are of passing interest; inasmuch as they give us a glimpse into the troubles, privations, and hostilities, which the early colonists and comers had to contend against. History tells with what ease Bakhtyār Khiljī became the master of a part of Bengal, but passes over the hardship which subsequently terminated his career.¹ Our Society cannot, therefore, lose sight of monuments with no inscriptions, as also much of the legends and traditions of the past, for the fulfilment of its great objects.

Shāhzādpūr, the headquarters of a thana and till lately of a Munşifi, is situated on the south centre of the great jute-producing sub-division of Sirājganj, which forms the northern half of the District of Pabna, which, again, occupies the south-east corner of the Rājshāhī

¹ The popular notion that India fell an easy prey to the Musalmans is opposed to the historical facts. Hunter's "Indian Empire," 3rd edition, 1893, page 323.

Commissionership of Bengal.¹ Shāhzādpūr lies on the Harasāgar river in N.L. 24' 0" and E. Long 89° 39' 20," is famous for a superb Masjid, the *mazārs* of Makhdūm Shāh Daūla "Shahīd," and other Muḥammadans, and an annual fair. There is no written account of the early colonists. The deeds and papers are said to have suffered loss on account of the climate, fire, or carelessness. They are not, however, forthcoming.

1.—*The Traditions.*

Hazrat Mu'āzz-'ibn-Jabal, the King of Yaman in Arabia, and a companion of the Prophet, had two sons and a daughter. One of these two shāhzādas (princes) Makhdūm Shāh Daula, with the permission of his father, left his native land, on a religious expedition, for the spread of Islām, consisting of three of his nephews (sister's sons)—Khwāja Kalān Dānishmand, Khwāja Nūr, and Khwāja Anwar, his sister, twelve renowned Darvishes, and a large number of followers. They sailed in ships 7 or 40 in number, on their expedition. Arriving at Bokhārā, Shāh Jalālu-d-Dīn Bokhārī—a saint of the place—welcomed the pilgrims, and presented a few ash-coloured (*khākī*) pigeons to the Makhdum Ṣāhib. After a long and circuitous voyage, the missionaries arrived at a place, now called Potājia, two miles south of Shāhzādpūr. The whole country at that time was under water and appeared as a vast ocean. The ships struck on a sandy bed, and consequently the expedition could not proceed up. The Bokhārā pigeons used, as usual, to leave the ships, in the morning, and return to them by the evening-tide. After a few days' halt, the people on board noticed in the feet of the birds fresh clay and sand. On the following day a *dinghi* (boat) was sent towards the flight of the birds, and a newly forming *car*, subsequently named Shāhzādpūr, was discovered. The ships being disentangled and removed, the party landed upon the *car*-land. Little by little when the water subsided, the little *car* was transformed into an extensive one. On this spot—to commemorate the landing—a mosque was built by order of the Makhdum Ṣāhib.

At that time, the country was under the Hindu Raja of Ṣūba-i-Bihār, who would not allow a foreign colony to be established in his dominion, and sent a large army to drive the colonists away. Then ensued a life-and-death struggle between the little band of foreign Muslims on one side, and the vast army of the native king on the other. Three bloody battles were fought, in two of which, the devoted followers of the Makhdum Ṣāhib were victorious. In the third, the saintly prince was killed. Two of his nephews, the Darvishes, as well as a large

¹ There is another Shāhzādpūr in the Barisal District of Bengal.

number of his followers, too, were killed by stratagem, in one or other of these battles. The lady, who was the sister of the Makhdūm Ṣāhib, preferred death to dishonour, and is believed to have thrown herself into a water-pool and perished.

A soldier of the enemy, who was concealed, cut off the head of the saint, while the latter was deeply engaged in saying his afternoon ('*aṣr*) namāz. The man left at once, with the head, for the rājā of the Ṣūba-i-Bihār. The head being placed before the king, the latter perceiving in it celestial radiance and supernatural calm became very much astonished, and intensely sorry and ashamed at the conduct of the soldier. Having summoned the leading Musalmans of Bihār, the head was buried with due solemnity and a masjid constructed over the brick-tomb. A fair is held every year near the place, ever since.

At Shāhzādpūr, on the other hand, the head-less body was deposited into a stone-coffin, and buried by the surviving nephew, Khwāja Shāh Nūr, and his other followers, about *ten rasīs* to the south of the mosque.¹

2.—*The Tombs.*

As stated above, there fell in the struggle a large number of the Muslims. The shrine of the Makhdūm Ṣāhib "Shahīd" (the Martyr) being in a low-lying tract, at some distance from the mosque, those who used to go there to perform *ziyārat* had to suffer discomfort or were exposed to danger, in wading their way through marshes in the rains, and on account of the snakes. The saint appeared to one of the faithful, and directed the coffin to be removed. Accordingly it was buried by the side of the mosque. The tombs or graveyards are all on the south of the masjid. Besides the shrine of the Makhdūm Ṣāhib and his nephews, there exist 18 other tombs, *viz.*, the tombs of the 12 Darvishes, named—(1) Shamsud-d-Dīn Tabrizī; (2) Shāh Yūsuf; (3) Shāh Khēng-sawār; (4) Shāh A'zmat; (5) Hasila-*pīr*; (6) Shāh Bodlā; (7) Shāh Aḥmad; (8) Shāh Maḥmūd. The names of the other four are not remembered. The names of 6 other *auliyā*—who settled and died subsequently—are (13) Shāh Mastān,² (14) Shāh Ḥabibullāh, (15)

¹ I am not informed who the Ṣūba-i-Bihār Rājā was. "The lower Gangetic Valley, from Bihār downwards, was still [during the early Muḥammadan invasion] in parts governed by Pal or Buddhist dynasties, whose names are found from Benares to jungle-buried hamlets deep in the Bengal Delta."—*Indian Empire*, p. 322. Was he a real Rājā or a chief of the banditti, who ravaged the country in armed bands, like the Maghs and Bargīs of the later times?

² Sometimes, in the dark night, it is said, a column of light, brighter far than the electricity, is seen ascending up from the *āstāna* of "Shāh Mastān" towards the sky, which phenomenon lasts a few minutes.

Shāh Madār, (16) Hādī Ṣāhib. The names of the other two are not known.

The shrine of Khwāja Kalān Dāniṣhmand is to the right side of that of the Makhdūm Ṣāhib the "Martyr," and the shrines of his other nephews and of the Darvishes are hard-by. The shrines of Makhdūm Ṣāhib, Khwāja Kalān Dāniṣhmand, and Darvish Shāh Yūsuf are enclosed with walls; and lately a corrugated iron roof of octagonal shape has been put over them. Shamsu-d-Din Tabrizī was Makhdūm Ṣāhib's teacher. His tomb is enclosed with walls (4' 6" high). Shāh Yūsuf was a companion (*aṣḥāb*). Out of the waqf estate, a few acres are set apart for the expenses of lighting the *āstāna* of Shāh Khēng-Sawār and for looking after it. This is done by a paid servant. Hindus and Musalmans make offerings to Darvish Shāh Ḥabībullāh's shrine.

There are two ganj-i-shahīdān (literally "mart of martyrs," *i.e.*, two large pits, where a large number of martyrs were buried), besides the above tombs:— (1) by the side of the mosque—where respectable persons were interred, and (2) some ten rasis to the south of the mosque—where soldiers were buried, and where Makhdūm Ṣāhib himself was buried at first. The tombs have no inscriptions.

The little water-pool, where the Makhdūm Ṣāhib's sister perished is called *Satī bibīr khāl* (or the watery grave of the virgin lady). It lay close to the mosque. Pilgrims used to throw sugar and *batasa*, etc. into it to have their desires fulfilled. Owing to the encroachment of the river, the identical spot—where the virgin was drowned—cannot be ascertained. Consequently the practice of throwing sweetmeats has, of late, ceased.

3.—*The Place and the Population.*

The place is called Shāhzādpūr, after the title of Ḥazrat Makhdūm Ṣāhib, who was the Shāhzāda of Yaman. The Pargana Yūsuf-Shāhī, in which is situated Shāhzādpūr, is called so, after the name of the Makhdūm Ṣāhib's companion "Yūsuf Shāh"¹

The population of the place is about ten thousand souls. The Muhammadans are half as much again as the Hindus. Of the three

¹ Most of the mahals (revenue free estates) situated in Sirajganj, are small and many of them are reported to be connected with the history of the Makhdūm Ṣāhib, whose cubit was the unit of measurement in Pargana Yūsufshāhī, until the zamīndārs introduced short measures there.—Hunter's Statistical Account of the Pabna District, Vol. IX, pages, 315-316.

The cause of the agrarian disturbance of 1873 was owing to the zamīndārs of the Pargana Yūsufshāhī "raising their rent rolls by decreasing the standard of measurement."—Statistical Account, Pabna.

nephews of the Makhdūm Ṣāhib, Khwāja Kalān Dāniṣhmand was not married, and Khwāja Anwar died childless. Khwāja Nūr, the only surviving nephew of the Makhdūm Ṣāhib, married a Muḥammadan Princess of Sonārgāon. Their descendants are the present Mutawallis. With the Sonārgāon Princess came a large number of persons, both Hindus and Muslims, who with the old survivals re-established the colony. The present inhabitants of Shāhzādpūr, are supposed to be their descendants. Shāhzādpūr is divided into fourteen *maḥallas* or sections, according to the origin, profession, or rank, etc., of the emigrants from Sonārgāon. The following are the *maḥallas* :—(1) Ḥaidar-ābād, (2) Qandahārī-pāra, (3) Pathān-pāra, (4) Mihtar-pāra, (5) Muḡhal-hāṭṭa, (6) Kāghazī-tōla, (7) Qāzī-pāra, (8) Mullā-pāra, (9) Cuniakhālī-pāra, (10) Katgar-pāra, (11) Mutia-pāra, (12) Dhari-pāra, (13) Car-pāra, (14) Āndhār-koṭha.

The place whence earth was dug, and into which lime was deposited, for the construction of the buildings, is called Cunia-khālī, and the pāra, Cunia-khālī-pāra (or lime-tank-quarter). There was a jail or house of correction, where criminals used to be imprisoned and so called Āndhār-koṭhā or “Black-Hole.” Its traces can still be seen. From it the quarter takes its name.

4.—*The Mosque.*

Area of the interior :—Length 51 ft. 9 in., breadth 31 ft. 5 in., height 16 ft. 2 in.

Area of the exterior :—Length 62 ft. 9 in., breadth 41 ft. 3½ in., height 19 ft. 10 in.

The wall is 5 ft. 7 in. thick. There are five door-ways, each measuring 7 ft. 5 in. in height by 6 ft. ½ in. in breadth. The utmost height of the domes—15 in number—from the floor of the temple is 20 ft. 9 in. The mosque is built of bricks and lime of cowries. The edifice is supported by 28 pillars of black basalt, one of which is a little dissimilar from others in colour. It is pressed, contrary to the Islamic Law, by women to their bosom, praying for the birth of children. Their vows, it is supposed, are fulfilled.

Attached to the western inner wall of the masjid—on a platform, measuring 6 ft. 10 in. in length, 5 ft. 6 in. in breadth and 6 ft. 8 in. in height—is constructed the *mimbar* or pulpit, 5 ft. 2 in. high, having the same length and breadth as the platform beneath. An arched staircase, with seven steps, is so constructed as to touch the pulpit.

There is a brick *āngna* or platform in front of the temple. The floor of the latter is higher than that of the former by one inch. On both sides of the platform—north and south—walls have been built,

having an underground base of 4 ft. 6 in. The jambs of the doors are constructed of black basalt. Over the pulpit, and on the outer walls of the temple, are sculptured beautiful arabesques, consisting of foliage, fruits and other parts of the plant. Lengthwise on both sides of the walls there are half a dozen small false panellings made in plaster.

5.—*The Waqf Estate.*

The Shāhzādpūr mosque is endowed with 722 bighas of rent-free lands held direct from Government by trustees or *mutawallis*—who are descended, as stated above, from Khwāja Shāh Nūr and the Sonārgāon Princess. Of these lands only 15 *khadas* are set apart for the service of the temple. The remaining lands were given away to the original settlers, many of whose descendants still enjoy *lākhirāj*, *madad-i-ma'āsh* and other kinds of tenures¹.

There is a piece of stone upon which are inscribed certain figures (Plate No.) which I could not decipher.

6.—*The Fair.*

A *mēlā* or fair is held every year, close to the masjid—from the end of Cait to the beginning of Baisakh (April—May) which lasts for about a month. It is visited by Hindus and Muhammadans from far and near. The offerings consist of rice, fowls, sugar, and sweets, also pices for the *cirāghī*, for the fulfilment of their desires. The *mēlā* is visited by about seven thousand people.

The species of the Bokhārā pigeons—given by Shāh Jalālu-d-Din Bokhārī and called after him Jalālī kabūtar—still survive, and can be seen in the precincts of the Shāhzādpūr mosque as well as in the neighbouring villages.

7.—*Notes.*

The above is a complete review of the past traditions and the present state of the mosque and tombs of Shāhzādpūr. The former raises the following issues: (1) Was Bengal colonized as long ago as the first century of the Hijrī Era by the Arabs? (2) Who was the Makhdūm Šāhib and his followers?

Shāhzādpūr of the present is not in many respects the Shāhzādpūr of the past. Yet it tells the tales of a distant and dismal past—by its mosque and tombs. The site of a bloody battle-field is indicated by the

¹ Makhdūm Šāhib was a Muhammadan prince, who came to Bengal ... and was allowed to colonize Yūsufshāhī, then an uninhabited jungle ... Four sharers now hold the land, each of whom is honoured with the affix of 'Šāhib,' while the Senior sharer ... is well-known as an influential zamīndār.—Hunter's Statistical Account of Pabna, pp. 315-16.

promiscuously buried remains of the martyrs. Despite its reclaimed marshes and dried-up swamps, we can reasonably picture a time, when the place was of an alluvial formation, fit for a petty trading colony. The Tsan-pu or Brahmaputra, the Indus and the Satlej, may be said to start from the same water-parting in the highlands of Central Asia. After receiving several tributaries from the confines of the Chinese Empire, and twisting round the lofty eastern Himalayan range, the Brahmaputra rolls down the Assam Valley. As the Indus with its feeder, the Satlej, and the Brahmaputra, convey to India the drainage from the northern slopes of the Himalayas, so the Ganges, with its tributary, the Jamuna, collects the rainfall from the southern or Indian slopes of the mountain-wall and pours it down upon the plains of Bengal.¹

It is a well-known fact that this part of Bengal is annually, during the rainy season, inundated, and the wide stretches of country around look like a vast ocean as the name of the river *Harasāgar* indicates.²

In a remote period, we find that the whole ancient geography of India is obscured by changes in the courses of the rivers. Within historic times, many decayed or ruined cities attest the alteration in river beds. It is not, therefore, improbable that Arab coasting vessels came as far as the Gangetic Delta, and that Bengal was colonized in the first or second century of the Hijri Era by the Arabs. They, as also their predecessors, might have "followed the courses of the river."³ In 647 A.D. only fifteen years or so after the death of the Prophet, Khalif 'Othmān sent a sea-expedition to Thana and Broach on the Bombay coast. Other raids towards Sindh occurred in 662 and 664. An Arab ship being seized, Muḥammad b. Qāsim in 711 A.D. advanced into Sindh to claim damages, and settled himself in the Indus Valley.⁴

¹ *Vide* Hunter's "Indian Empire," Ch. I.

² The Padma as well as the other rivers, in this part of Bengal, have undergone, during the life time of man, great changes. The Padma that flows in the Pabna District is subject to constant alluvian and deluvian.

Dr. Hunter in the Statistical Account of Rangpur District, p. 162 says:—Dr. Buchanan Hamilton wrote in 1809 that "since the survey was made by Major Rennel (about 30 years ago) the rivers of the District (Rangpur) have undergone such changes that, I find the utmost difficulty in tracing them."

³ Indian Empire, p. 42.

⁴ Indian Empire, p. 311.

The general information with respect to the trade of the Arabians with India is confirmed and illustrated by the Relation of a Voyage from the Persian Gulf towards the East, written by the Arabian merchant in 851 A.D., and explained by the Commentary of another Arabian, who had likewise visited the Eastern part of Asia. This voyage together with the observations of *Abu-zaid-al-Hasan* of Siraf, was

According to Dr. Buchanan, "it is probable, indeed, that there were Muhammadans in this part (eastern) of Bengal, at a period long anterior to the conquest of the country by Bakhtyār Khiljī in 1203." Baṣra merchants, it is a fact, carried on an extensive maritime commerce with India and China, as early as the 8th century, and many of them settled in the countries they visited. Dr. William Robertson (*Ancient India*, p. 95) states that they were so numerous in Canton, that the Chinese Emperor (according to the Arab authors) permitted them to have a Qāzī of their own sect, who decided controversies among his country-men by their own laws, and presided in all the functions of religion. In other sea-ports proselytes were gained, and the Arabic language was spoken and understood.¹ There is reason to believe, from this circumstance, that Bengal was the seat of a colony of Muhammadan merchants at this early period. This may be inferred from the extensive commerce it enjoyed with the countries of the West from early times. See *J.A.S.* Vol. XVI (1847) pp. 76-77.

Was Shāhzādpūr—or rather Yūsufshāhī—such a colony? Was Makhdūm Shāh Daula "Shahīd" at once the Vasco de Gama and the Clive of the expedition? The tradition is told without regard for chronology. Native credulity has of course woven together exaggerated accounts.

The following biographical sketch of Mu'āzz-ibn Jabal whose son, published by M. Renouat in 1718. The Relation of the two Arab travellers is confirmed by Mas'ūdī, who himself visited India.

The progress of the Arabians extended far beyond the Gulf of Siam, the boundary of European navigation. They became acquainted with Sumatra and the other islands of the Indian Archipelago and advanced as far as Canton. Nor are these discoveries to be considered as the effect of the enterprising curiosity of individuals; they were owing to a regular commerce carried on from the Persian Gulf with China and all the intermediate countries. In a short time they advanced far beyond the boundaries of ancient navigation and brought many of the most precious commodities of the East directly from the countries which produced them. They noticed the general use of silk among the Chinese. They are the first who mention the celebrated manufacture of porcelain. They describe the tea-tree, and the mode of using its leaves, and the great revenue which was levied from the consumption of tea—*Extracted from Dr. William Robertson's "An Historical Disquisition Concerning Ancient India," Section III, pp. 93-96, and Note XXXVI, p. 224.*

¹ As with the Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish, and English, so with the Arabs of old, commerce was the first consideration that impelled them to seek adventures. Commerce was followed by colonizing zeal and missionary enterprise. Their long domiciliation in India led them to contract undesirable marriages with low-caste native females, thus giving birth to a new race of Indo-Arabs, which produced slowly but surely, degeneration, deterioration and downfall.

it is said, came to Bengal, is taken from the *Iṣābah* (Biblio-theca Indica edition), Vol. III, page 872:—

“He was Abū ‘Abdu-r-Raḥmān-al-Anṣārī-al-Khizrajī, an Imām of the Science of the Lawful and the Unlawful (Islāmic Law), and was present at the battle of Badr, at the age of 21. The Prophet (may God’s blessing be upon him) deputed him to Yaman, gave him his blessings, permitted him to accept gifts and wrote thus to the people of Yaman: ‘I send to you the best of us.’ Mu‘azz returned, during the *Khilāfat* of Abū Bakr, from Yaman. In his *Huliya*, Abū Noēm states that Mu‘azz-ibn-Jabal was a leader of the lawyers, and a store-house for the scholars. He fought at Badr, Aqaba, and other battles. By his meekness, modesty, and liberality, he was the best of the young Anṣārs. His body was symmetrical and he was handsome. Of him Ka‘b-ibn-Malik says that he was handsome, brave, and the best specimen of his tribe. So says Al-Wāqidī—that he was one of the handsomest men, took part in many battles. He recited several *Hadīth*es from the Prophet, which have been quoted by Ibn-i-‘Abbās, Ibn-i-‘Omar, Ibn-i-Abī Aufī-al-ash‘arī, ‘Abdu-r-Raḥmān-b-Samara, Jābir-b-Ānas, and other tābi‘īn.

Mu‘azz died in Syria (*Shām*) in 17 H. or according to many in 18 H., of Plague, at the age of 34.”

I am not aware of what became of his children and grandchildren. It is probable that they emigrated to Mesopotamia or Transoxiana, as so many others had done.¹

Saiyid Jalālu-d-dīn Bokhārī,² during whose life-time the sea-expedition, it is said, was undertaken, was born at Bokhārā, came to India, and became a disciple of *Shaikh* Bahāu-d-Dīn Zakariyā of Multān. The latter read *Hadīth* with *Shaikh* Kamālu-d-Dīn Muḥammad of Yaman, at Medina. It is a fact that *Khwāja* Quṭbu-d-Dīn Bakhtyār Kākī, *Khwāja* Farīdu-d-Dīn Ganj-i-Shakar, *Khwāja* Bahāu-d-Dīn Zakariyā of Multān (cousin of the former), Saiyid Jalāluddīn Bokhārī, Lāl *Shāh*-

¹ One of his sons died in his life-time, when the Prophet wrote to him a very celebrated letter, which has been translated and paraphrased in Persian by *Shaikh* ‘Abdu-l-Haq Dihlavī (958-1052 H.) and is to be found among his collected epistles and miscellaneous treatises, printed at the Majtabāi Press, Delhi.

² Saiyid Jalālu-d-Dīn Bokhārī came and settled at Uchh in the Multān District, where he died. One of his grandsons was the famous Saiyid Jalālu-d-Dīn Husain Bokhārī, better known as *Makhdūm-i-Jahāniyā*. The latter was born at Uchh and died there in 785 H. He visited Bokhārā, the birthplace of his grandfather.

The names of the *Makhdūm* Ṣāhib and of his nephews show that they must have been born in Iran, or Tūrān. They were rather known by their *soubriquets* than by their proper names.

bāz, and Khwāja Nizāmu-d- Dīn Auliya were contemporaries. Bahāu-d-Dīn Zakariya lived between 578 and 666 H. It is, therefore, likely that the Shāhzādpūr Makhdūm Shāhib, too, was one of their contemporaries—if the tradition is to be believed—and came to, and settled in, Bengal in the *sixth* century of the Hijrī—about the time of Muḥammad Bakhtyār Khiljī's conquest of Lakhnauti in 600 H.=1203 A.D. He might have come in the 8th century Hijrī, when Shāh Jalāluddīn's grandson was living at Multan.

It is a significant fact that most of the saints of the time, who came to India, were from the Empire of Bokhārā, that is, Turkistan or Central Asia, and were originally Arabs and entitled "Khwāja." It is more striking that, because one of the forefathers of Khwāja Farīdu-d-Dīn Ganj-i-Shakar was a Prince of Kābul, all his descendants, for many generations, used to be called either Shāhzāda or Shāh.

I am, therefore, led to suppose that the Makhdūm Shāhib too was from Central Asia, closely related to some of the Khwājas of the time, and that he too was by descent an Arab of the family of Mu'azz-ibn-Jabal. His settling at Yūsufshāhī may be said to synchronise with the conquest of Bengal by the Khiljī General, Muḥammad Bakhtyār.
